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The Will of Christ for the World

BY THE

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LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

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THE WILL OF CHRIST FOR THE WORLD.

An Address by the Right Rev. CHARLES P. ANDERSON, Bishop of the Diocese of Chicago, at the Men's National Missionary Congress, Chicago, May, 1910.

The subject which has been assigned to me is, "The Will of Christ for the World." It is a subject which one ought to approach on one's knees. It is an awful responsibility to undertake to interpret the mind of Christ for the world. Fortunately, we are not left to our own resources; we do not have to guess at it. We do not have to depend on any mental process of ratiocination. It does not have to be evolved out of our inner consciousness. We have only to listen to the divine authoritative voice, and then interpret that voice in the language of practical obedience.

I shall venture to interpret the will of Christ for the world, so far as the purposes of this gathering are concerned, in two words. They are Universality and Unity—the universality of the religion of Jesus Christ, the unity of the Christian Church. I take it that there are no two things that stand out more prominently in the pages of the New Testament than these. First, that the religion of Christ is for the whole world; and secondly, that there is to be oneness on the part of the disciples of Christ, in order that the whole world may know and believe.

First, universality. I do not have to argue it in this gathering. It is an axiom. It is a postulate. It is the very central belief of our religion. Christ is the Son of God. "God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole

earth." Whatsoever God purposes through Christ for any part of the world, he purposes for all parts of the world. Christ belongs to no nation, but to all nations; to no race, but to all races; to no age, but to all ages. He is not simply a man, but Man, universal Man; not a god, but God incarnate for all humanity. "God of God, Light of Light, who for us men and for our salvation was made Man." And if we come away from the somewhat stiff statements of theological language to the mellower language of the New Testament, we find that every page is full of the same idea. "God so loved the world," not a portion of it, but the whole world, "that he gave his only begotten Son." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Men sometimes speak of "Christ and other Masters;" Christ alone is Master and all others are brethren. Christ has no competitors. Christ has no rivals. "There is none other name given under Heaven whereby man can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ." "In the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow."

This does not involve that you and I deny that the non-Christian, ethnic faiths of the world have any ethical or moral value. We rejoice when we find that they have. God has not left himself without witnesses. In every nation the people have some idea of God, some consciousness of right and wrong, some glimmering of immortality. In some cases they exist in a very rude and crude form and lead to all kinds of fantastic cruelties in the name of religion. In some cases they exist in a more developed form. That is our starting point. The Christian missionaries, like

Christ, came not to destroy but to fulfil. We hold that Christ is the logical and inevitable outcome of all religions. As Saint Augustine said, "Men are naturally Christians." We hold that there is in every man certain instincts and intuitions and endowments which, if given a proper environment and proper cultivation, will inevitably lead up to his being a Christian man. "If ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

We do not seek to destroy the good that people already have; but to lead them from what they have to what they have not. "Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you." The goal of the Christian religion is Christ. It is not a question of whether there are good things in their sacred books, or whether they have some virtues, or whether they or we have an open Bible, or whether a Church organization exists. The great question is, have they, have we, Christ? That is the goal. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." I am thankful that we do not have to argue this proposition in this presence. It is of the very essence of the gospel of Christ that it is a universal gospel.

But the universality of the Christian religion not only rests upon our claims for Christ, but also upon the fact that it has demonstrated its fitness to be the universal religion, and its power to be the universal religion. Just think of a few broad facts. Christianity was born in the world at a time when there were many ancient civilizations. Egypt had seen great days. Babylon had been mighty. Greece had reached a high pinnacle of fame. Rome had seen some proud and imperial times. China had at that time an ancient civilization. These civilizations had failed to save

them. And Christianity, in less than two thousand years, practising upon decadent civilizations, or upon barbarous civilizations, has in a short space of time brought these nations in which it has operated, away ahead of all the ancient civilizations. It is indubitably true that the Christian religion injects certain inextinguishable elements into human society, with the consequence that the Christian nations make much more progress in all the high things of life than all the other nations of the world.

Let us take a brief but striking illustration; let us contrast Christianity with Mohammedanism. Freeman says in his book upon the Saracens that "Mohammedanism has consecrated despotism; has consecrated polygamy; has consecrated slavery." Now, contrast the influence of Christianity with that. Is it not true that Christianity has consecrated liberty, not despotism; it has consecrated monogamy, not polygamy; it has abolished slavery. Christianity at an early date touched that ancient civilization of Greece. It was at a decadent period. Her art and her architecture had not saved her. Her poets and her orators, her philosophers and her statesmen had not saved her. Bear in mind that Christianity overtook that civilization at a time when it was doomed to absolute destruction. What saved it from destruction? What preserved the national life in spite of most appalling calamities? What saved that little country of Greece from Ottoman tyranny, from the Moslem scimitar, from external disaster, from her own internal corruption? Why, if we can believe such thoughtful students as Freeman and Finley and Stanley, nothing else preserved the continuity of that country than the introduction into it of the Christian religion. Go into that country today, and though you may find many

things that are not admirable, though one may find that they are very short of having attained anything like the highest standard of Christian life, nevertheless, if you pick out the strong things, the enduring things, the things that have saved them, they have been the things that were not born within themselves, but the things which Christianity contributed to them. That religion brought to them at a perilous time certain principles that appealed to them—the eternity of God, the brotherhood of man through Jesus Christ, and though their armies might be destroyed, though terrible calamities might ensue, they imbibed those Christian principles which have held that nation together.

Come over to the civilization of the Latin races. Bear in mind that we are contrasting the effects of religion in a civilization that was decadent, at a time of political weakness, with other religions at the height of civilization and at the height of political power. It is not putting our religion to a proper advantage, and yet it can stand the test. Compare the great men, the ideals, the poets of the Latin races after Christianity was introduced, with the ideals and the poets and the great men of the Roman Empire prior to the time of the birth of Christ or the missionary labours of St. Paul. Compare, if you will, a Virgil with a Dante. Does not Dante have something grander and sublimer; did he not have visions which the great poet Virgil never saw because he had never heard of a Christ? Compare St. Augustine with Marcus Aurelius. We do not care to minimize the virtues of Marcus Aurelius, but is it not true that Augustine penetrated down deeper, that he reached up higher, that he saw things that Marcus Aurelius never saw? Compare such a man

as St. Francis d'Assisi with a Seneca or an Epictetus. Think of the great Latin doctors that have made their contributions to Christian literature. Think of their great saints, men and women. Think of their great hymns. Think of their great prayers. Is there anything in the ancient Roman world, with all its might and power and organization, that ever produced such types of men as Christianity produced?

Take our own civilization. Christianity overtook us at a time when our forefathers were rude barbarians. Where did we get our ideas of God, our ideas of truth, of honour, of purity, of charity, of home, of wife, of child, of mother? You say they came as the result of civilization. What is civilization but the humanization of men, but where did the humanization power come from? They are nothing more or less than the direct contribution of the religion of Jesus Christ to the humanity that we share.

Yes, the greatest power in the world has been the power of Christ. His work is not yet completed, but it is working towards completeness. He has given birth to spiritual kingdoms. He has laid the cornerstone of our highest civilization. He has revivified old dead maxims into living realities. He has scattered the face of the earth with principles that were based upon the eternal love of the eternal Father. He has been the preacher of liberty, fraternity and equality. He has abolished slavery from our midst. He has inspired our best literature. He has founded institutions of learning. He has been giving new conceptions of sin, new ideas of duty, and new hopes of immortality. He has been consecrating childhood, he has been dignifying womanhood, he has been sanctifying our homes, he has been helping the poor, he has been delivering people from the oppressor, he has

been lifting people by the thousands, one by one, one by one, out of the dung-hill of their sins and causing them to throw themselves upon the all-redeeming love of the Saviour of the world. Notwithstanding the faults that can be found in the administration of the Christian Church, notwithstanding the weakness that can be found there, the most magnificent, the most pervasive, the greatest power in the direction of all that is highest in human life has been Christ and the Christian Church. Every altar that is erected is consecrated to the truth that sets men free. Every tower that is built rests upon the eternal Rock of Ages. Every spire points men to the highest things, to their future home, and heaven and God.

Obliterate Christianity out of the world, strike it out of our literature, burn up your Bibles, throttle the choirs, hush up the preacher's voice, break down the altars, take away these things, and there is no archangel that would be sufficiently eloquent to depict the horribleness and the vastness of the catastrophe that would ensue. In spite of our faults we can sing the old psalm: "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men."

So I say that we start out in this Congress first with the conviction that Christ is universal; that the Christian religion is to be universal; that it has the power of being universal; and that it is the most potential thing for righteousness that the world has ever seen. That is the first part of our programme.

And now unity. Of course, unity is not uniformity. Unity is not unanimity of opinion. Unity is not platform agreement. Unity is not a federation of separated churches; nor is it organic separation and rivalry. Unity is that oneness in the visible body

of Christ that makes men know and believe. This, of course, is not the time or the place to discuss unity as a platform. It is not the time or the place to say a single word of a controversial character. Neither is it the time nor the place for any of us to say foolish things for the sake of saying perhaps the popular things; but I fear one cannot discuss the subject, "The Will of Christ for the World," without touching unity. And you and I cannot consider the most statesmanlike, the most economic, the most efficient methods of missionary administration without considering unity.

It is well for us to remember that the greatest triumphs that the Christian Church has ever won were in the days when the Church was one. It is well for us to remember that the greatest triumphs that Christianity has ever won, were won, shall I say, before the Thirty-nine Articles were written, or the Westminster Confession, or the Augsburg Confession. And the greatest triumphs that Christianity is going to win will be the triumphs of a united Christian discipleship.

Let me take you to a little town not very far from Chicago. It has but thirteen hundred population, men, women and children. It has nine churches. Some of these nine churches are being supported by contributions from home mission boards. There are fifty-five per cent. of the men of that town that do not belong to any of the nine. But why? Because they are so feeble, necessarily so feeble when they divide thirteen hundred souls among nine of them—they are all necessarily so feeble as not to be commanding exponents of the Christian religion in the town in which they exist. Does the number of religions increase the amount of religion? Is there

not a danger that these labels become libels on true Christianity?

Let me take you to another town not so very far from Chicago. It is a larger town. It has thirty-two churches in it, thirty-two separate organizations. I am told some of these churches are in need of support from the home missionary boards, when anything like Christian statesmanship would strengthen the church in that town and make it a contributory force to spreading the gospel throughout all the world. I believe that we are wasting more money through overlapping, through dove-tailing, through rivalries, than would evangelize a whole race in a single generation. Is it wise? Is it statesmanlike? Is it Christian?

I would be the very last person to put forward the economic argument as one of the first arguments on behalf of Christian unity. Better have five hundred churches, each one with its own truths and its own spiritual convictions, than one united church at the sacrifice of a single truth, or of a single spiritual reality. Better waste a million dollars than to sacrifice a spiritual experience or a precious truth. But is it necessary either to waste money on the one hand or to sacrifice convictions on the other? I am quite sure that many of us have been approaching the subject wrong-end first. We have been asking what can we give up in the interests of unity. That is not the question. It is not what we can give up, but what can we give? You have no right to give up anything that you have had that ever has been of value, that is of value, or that is likely to be of value. You have no right to give up anything that has ever received the divine sanction or the divine approval. It is not what we can give up, but what we can give. I have a horror of that kind of unity that would be based on a

sort of residuum. I am not attracted by unity on the basis of an irreducible minimum. I do not want to belong to a Church of minimums. I want to belong to a Church of maximums. Maximum beliefs, maximum duties, maximum sacrifices. The Church of minimums is incapable of producing martyrdoms. There *are* things that we can give up, but nobody is asking anybody to give up anything that is of value. We can give up pride. We can give up our ecclesiastical conceit. We can give up our denominational jealousies. We can give up our inherited prejudices. And perhaps by the grace of God we can give up some of our ignorance. I lay this down, brethren, as a proposition that has already demonstrated itself, Christlike Christians cannot stay apart. Take this Laymen's Missionary Movement. To me the most significant thing about it is this, that as I see it, all kinds of Christians, Roman Christians, if they would, Oriental Christians, Anglican Christians, Protestant Christians of every name can, without a single scruple of conscience, come and take their part and their portion in this great enterprise.

Why? It is because we have all got the same central unity up to this point. We all believe in Christ. We believe that the world is for him, and we believe that he has come to have the whole world. Glory be to God! That at the end of two thousand years, in spite of bitter controversies, and interminable logomachies and almost bloody religious warfare, Christians throughout the whole world can get together on that platform: Christ for the world and the world for Christ. There is more unity than we think. The things that separate Christians are inconsequential in comparison with that that separates Christians from non-Christians. "He that hath the

Son, hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Well, that is our programme. The universality of the Christian religion and the ultimate unity of the Church of Christ. Isn't it a big enough programme? Is the world big enough for you? Is Christ attractive enough for you?

"Ashamed of Jesus, can it be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee?"

Let us rigidly and loyally adhere to that programme in spite of the worldliness of the Church, in spite of the unbelief and the half-belief of our Christian membership, in spite of our cold love and our painless sacrifices, in spite of the absolutely un-Christian talk that we hear from the pews that they do not believe in missions, in spite of everything, let us not pull down the flag one inch. Christ is for the whole world and the whole world for Christ. And as a means to that end let us all be prophets of unity, priests of unity, apostles of unity. We can do that much at any rate. We can say of unity as we say of universality—we can if we will; *we can and we will.*

May I conclude by throwing these thoughts into the most efficient language which I know, the language of prayer.

O God, who has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth, and has sent thy Son, Jesus Christ, to preach peace to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh, grant that all men everywhere may seek after thee and find thee. Bring the nations into thy fold, and add the heathen to thine inheritance. And we pray thee shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom. Give us grace seriously to

lay to heart the great dangers that we are in by our unhappy division. Take away from us all pride, envy, jealousy, hatred and uncharitableness and anything that hinders godly union and concord; that as there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May our lex credendi always be our lex orandi.